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THE FAST OF TEBETH.

"Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this selfsame day: the king of Babylon drew close unto Jerusalem this selfsame day."—Ezek. xxiv. 2.

*(From the Hebrew of Joseph bar Samuel Tob Elem.
Date about 1040.)*

Lo! I recall the siege which fell on me:

Within this month he struck me; he destroyed

With three blows;—cut me down and left me void;—

Now he hath made me weary utterly¹.

He silenced on the eighth day all my throng:

(Have I not for three things a fast proclaimed?)

The king bade: write the law in Greek²;—they maimed,
They ploughed on me; they made their furrows long³.

Upon the ninth day—wrath, disgrace, and shame!

Stripped off was my fair robe in honour worn;

For he who gave sweet words⁴ was surely torn:

Ezra the scribe—yea, he of blessed name⁵.

The tenth day: then the seer was bidden: "Yea,

Write thee within the book of vision; write

This for remembrance; now shalt thou indite

For them despised and crushed—this selfsame day⁶."

¹ Job xvi. 7.

² Talmud, *Megillah*, 9a; and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book XII, chap. ii.

³ Ps. cxxix. 3.

⁴ Gen. xlix. 21.

⁵ According to tradition the ninth of Tebeth was the day of Ezra's death.

⁶ Ezek. xxiv. 2.

Counting the months, within the tenth the woe
And wail he wakened; but the sorrow's smart—
Its onward way was branded on my heart
When one came saying: "The city is struck low¹."

For these things I have scattered o'er me dust:
Oh that a shaft had pierced mine heart that day!
—For such woe I would dig my grave;—but nay,
I wrought rebelliously: the Lord is just².

I call thee, thou who hast repentance nigh
For mine affliction; lo! my praying heed;
Hear my beseeching; my salvation speed;
Hide thee not at my sighing, at my cry³.

O moon Tebeth! exceeding is my sum
Of pain therein: when his face changed for me.
Yet, though I sinned, his goodness I shall see,
Who saith: "Ye waves, but so far shall ye come⁴."

NINA DAVIS.

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 21.

² Lam. i. 13.

³ Lam. iii. 56.

⁴ Job xxxviii. 11.